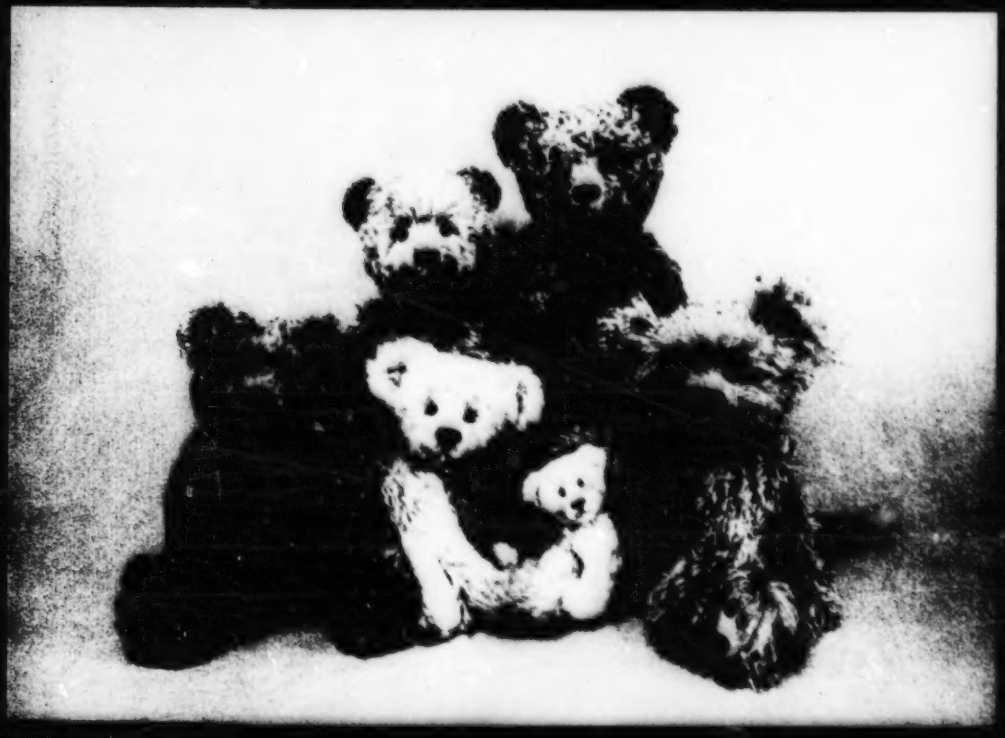
NOVA SCOTIA CENTRE
for CRAFT *and* DESIGN

Teddy Bears: 100 Years of Love and Comfort



Mary E. Black Gallery ● August 2 - September 7, 2002

NOVA SCOTIA
Tourism and Culture

Teddy Bears: 100 Years of Love and Comfort

The classic toy bear has come to represent the hopeful joy and pathos of childhood. Its continuing universal appeal is a reminder that the finer human characteristics of kindness, gentle humour, constancy and patience are still longed for and esteemed. It is often the talisman that comforts a fearful child or reminds a harried adult of the friend whose ursine gift conveyed tender affection in the giving. Teddy bears bring happiness and solace as gifts, mascots, or companions from an earlier time of innocence. They exist to remind us of the best things, and the best things about us.

Teddy bears are one of the most collected items world wide. Some people begin their collections with a favourite bear from childhood, others are attempting to fill the void left by the bear that went missing, but many collectors are quite simply unexpectedly overwhelmed by the charm of these endearing soft sculptures and the emotions they evoke.

The fully articulated, posable teddy toy has never lost favour. They even continued to be made through two world wars, when materials were in short supply and toy factories were commandeered for the war effort. Through these difficult periods, some manufacturers accepted wool coats and blankets to be made into well loved teddys, and often, during these hard times and since, many a teddy bear has been made for a child at home using the most appropriate material at hand.

The move to mass production in the 20th century compromised the quality of stuffed animal toys in general. Sometimes the intrinsic charm of the teddy bear style in these incarnations was almost lost. In mass production quality is not the first priority and an appealing result is more a matter of luck than design. Cheaper synthetic creations crowded, and continue to crowd, children's bedrooms, proliferating with each new special occasion. More is not always better, especially when a fair minded child must follow a rigid schedule to give each toy a turn to be the companion of the day. Or when there are so many that their primary function is to decoratively collect dust.

Gradually the superiority of the early bears became clearly obvious, spurring ever higher prices at auction. Careful cleaning and repairing of old bears served to preserve their fabric and enhance their value. Many a treasure has been revealed after the meticulous attention of an excellent restoration, and many a new teddy bear artist has been born from the experience. One has to admire the undiminished beauty of the gently cleaned mohair coat of an antique bruin, even though it might have been worn almost to its cotton backing, many years ago, from the loving attention of a child.

In 1980 Steiff, still the pre-eminent manufacturer of quality soft toys and teddy bears, introduced a special edition bear to commemorate their 100th anniversary. The success of this endeavour inspired them to begin reproducing some of their original designs. This greatly stimulated the public's renewed interest in the traditional mohair teddy bear. Other companies have followed suit with traditionally inspired teddy bears, often in limited editions. Some of these limited editions are made with the co-operation of independent teddy bear artists who have sold their designs with their names attached. These artists have, unfortunately, often run into the problem of poorer than promised quality inherent in mass production.

Some collectors of old bears have attempted to make teddys themselves, as have others inspired by the same tradition. As natural a process as thinking and creating in three-dimensions is to those who can, for others it is an all but impossible task. Those people who have tried and succeeded in designing and making their own bears are truly artists.

The purpose of this exhibition is to show those qualities of antique bears that have been, and continue to be, an inspiration for the teddy bear artists of today and to show examples from Nova Scotian teddy bear artists.

The teddy bear has been with us now for a 100 years but the phenomenon of the "Teddy Bear Artist" is still a surprise outside of the world of serious collectors. Although they share many of their reasons for loving what they do, the artists are as individual as their original designs.

The Teddy Bear Artist Guild of Nova Scotia is a small dedicated group of professionals who came together four years ago, after meeting at out of province teddy bear shows. The collective pride that was felt at the wealth of talent displayed by Nova Scotians at those first shows gave the founding members the idea for the group. Since the beginning the members have been of one mind concerning their adherence to high standards of design and workmanship. They encourage and critique each other's work casually, and formally once a year. The result of this formal critique is a teddy made by each artist from one member's pattern. The resulting "hug" is then displayed before the bears go their separate ways to become fund raisers for local charities. The guild also started "The Teddy Bear Lovers Network" to include anyone interested in teddy bears and any teddy related things or events.

The engineering project that begins with a flat piece of fabric and results in a charming three dimensional creature that will then become someone's prized possession is no small feat. Tiny changes to a pattern in the right direction bring the artist ever closer to realizing their vision. Gail Griffiths, a very prolific

member of the guild has said, "after making more than 400 teddy bears, people ask if I am bored. I have to say no. Each new bear is unique. And as I finish one bear I begin to feel compelled to improve on it... So for me it is a never ending process of creation and self-satisfaction."

The connection that is made when a teddy bear artist's creation catches someone's eye and tugs at their heart, soul, or sense of humour, produces many happy anecdotes. These same fond memories remind one that the hard work and careful attention to detail is worth it. Irene Scott has expressed this feeling very well: "The greatest compliment that I can receive is to have someone say, 'that bear is talking to me,' then I've done it, a bond has been made." They must repeatedly dust off those finer characteristics of kindness, gentle humour, constancy and patience when they begin each creation. It is a very lucky artist who can find a nurturing environment in which to work without interruption. So at the end of the day there is a brand new teddy creation that is the product of those very qualities that the teddy bear will not allow us to forget.

Janice Rogers
June 2002

List of Works in the Exhibition

Teddy Bear Artists Guild of Nova Scotia

Donna Dill

1. Macintosh, honey gold mohair, 18".
2. Nathan, light tan mohair/alpaca blend, 7".
3. Alfred, hand-dyed blue mohair, 4".

Gail Griffiths

4. Zeke, tan mohair and cotton string, 19".
5. Clarence, tan mohair and dark backing, 14".
6. Spirit Bear, 16".
7. Tyler, sage green mohair, 16".
8. Ginger, hand-dyed gold mohair, 14".

Joan Murray

9. Linus, gold Mohair, 12".
10. Lionel, gold Mohair, 12".
11. Priscilla, gold mohair, 16".

Janice Rogers

12. Papa Bear, variegated grey plush, 22", 1991.
13. Serah, beige rayon plush, 7", 1993.
14. Paul's Bear, white alpaca, 7", 1997.
15. Mitch's Bear, dark brown mohair, 9", 1999.
16. Honey, bright gold mohair, 20", 1999.
17. Peter's Bear, dark gold mohair, 11", 2000.

Irene Scott

18. Louisa, tan mohair, 1902 costume, 14".
19. Kans (Kananaskis Park, Alberta), black and beige tipped mohair, 12".
20. Gazania, golden curly mohair with stained glass wings, 14".

Sandra Voegele

21. Humphrey, beige and brown plush, 28".
22. Beau, matted, olive green mohair, 10".
23. Harry, gold mohair, 7".

Antique and Contemporary Teddy Bear Collectors

Michelle Daniels

24. Whiskers, blond mohair, centre seam Steiff, 24", German, c.1907.
25. Raymond, beige mohair, Ideal Co., 25", American, c.1900.
26. Best Loved Teddy, beige mohair, 15", possibly German, c.1900.
27. Runt (dog), pale gold mohair, 8", possibly English, c.1920.
28. Lisa's Bear, honey gold mohair, original ribbon, US Zone Steiff, 6", German, c. 1947.
29. Tom, gold mohair, Steiff, 7", German, c.1912.
30. Vinnie, gold mohair, removable head with perfume bottle, Shuco Perfume Bear, 4.5", German, c.1925.
31. Alonso, gold mohair, pull toy, 6.5", possibly German, c.1920.
32. Footloose, blond mohair, 18.5", possibly American, c.1908.
33. Imo, creamy white mohair, 12", possibly German, c.1912.
34. Simon, blonde mohair, 15.5", possibly American, c.1908.
35. Percival, brown plush, 10", possibly American, c.1900.
36. Doberdane, gold mohair, Steiff Dog (missing ears), 9", German, c.1925.
37. Reggie, cinnamon mohair, 20", possibly English, c.1925.
38. Diego, gold mohair, Shuco yes/no bear, 16.5", German, c.1920.
39. Happy, beige long pile mohair, working music box, attributed to Helvetica Co., 12.5", Swiss, c.1930.
40. Minor, gold mohair, 7.5", German, c.1950.
41. Bearthusalah, white mohair, 10", possibly German, c.1900.
42. Lonesome, gold mohair, 13.5", possibly American, c.1925.

Gail Griffiths

43. Major Bear, light brown mohair, 14", American, possibly made by Horseman, original handmade

British Major uniform, c.1912.
44. Mrs. Pickles, gold cotton string, wearing a "lawn" doll dress from the same era, possibly made by Hermann Co., German, 1920.
45. Pip, gold cotton string, 6", possibly made by Hermann Co., German, 1920.
46. Peky, Pekinese dog made by Steiff, jointed head, original neck ribbon, 4", c. 1960.
47. Wee Gordie, gold mohair, 8", U.S. zone Steiff bear, c. 1948.
48. Simy, Siamese cat by Steiff, jointed head, original ribbon, 4", c. 1955.
49. Uncle Sid, tan mohair, probably Steiff, 12", German, c. 1905.
50. Mrs. Piddington, gold mohair, probably Japanese, 15", c. 1930.
51. Little Ronnie, British or Irish "Feed Me" bear, mouth opens when belly is pressed, 12", c. 1940.
52. Pinky, rare pink mohair, Zotty Bear by Steiff, 6", c. 1955.
53. Cousin Bruce, gold mohair, British bear by J.K.Farnell, 12", c. 1940.
54. Cousin Chadwick, white mohair, British bear by J.K.Farnell, 13", c. 1940.
55. Mandy, gold mohair, British bear by J.K.Farnell, 15", c. 1940.
56. Duncan Mac Bear, wearing knitted sweater socks and kilt c.1915, possibly British, 12", 1938.
57. Buster, cinnamon mohair, made by Knickerbocker, 13", American, c. 1935.
58. Untitled, gold mohair, British bear by Twyford, 14", c. 1950.
59. Untitled, gold mohair, British "Hugmee" bear by Chiltern, 17", c.1950.
60. Untitled, gold mohair, British "Hugmee" bear by Chiltern, 13", c.1950.
61. Ben, gold mohair, British "Hugmee" bear by Chiltern, 13",1947.
62. Untitled, gold mohair, British bear, Chad Valley, 17", c. 1950.
63. Untitled, gold mohair, British bear by Invicta, 12", c.1950.
64. Untitled, gold mohair, British bear by Merrythought, 13", c. 1932.
65. Untitled, gold mohair, British bear by J.K Farnell, 18", c. 1936.
66. Untitled, bristle gold mohair, 8", Japanese, c. 1950.

Sara MacAulay

67. Brunswick, Alpaca, Windsor Bears, 12", 2000.
68. Paddington, light honey plush, original boots, hat, coat and labels, Gabrielle Designs, 18", c. 1970.
69. Steiff, dark brown mohair, replica of 1920 'Classic Teddybar', 9", 1994.

Wally McIlmoyl

70. B. Bear, gold mohair, Chad Valley, 25", 1930.

Joan Murray

71. Granny's Bear, brown plush, made by Mr. & Mrs. W.K. Murray for their granddaughter Leslie Arrand, 16", 1970.
72. Stripes, brown and orange striped pants, Merrythought, 12", 1950.
73. Stubby, gold mohair, 14", Japanese.
74. Snuggles, two-toned gold alpaca, Windsor Bears, 9".
75. Baby, gold artificial silk plush, 9", German, possibly Shuco, c.1940.
76. Enigma, beige mohair, 8", German.
77. Flower, black and white corduroy, tape measure tongue, 8", Japanese.
78. Wally, beige mohair, Merrythought Co.,17", British, 1935.
79. Airly, gold mohair, 14", British.
80. Ben, pale gold mohair, 17", British.

Janice Rogers

81. Dicky Bear, gold mohair, air brushed accents, Steiff reproduction, limited edition, 1985.
82. Richard Steiff, grey mohair, limited edition, 1902-1903 Steiff reproduction, 1883.
83. Jahn and Jon, 2 Shuco miniatures, 2.5", c. 1940.
84. Emily, brown/black tipped mohair, made by Joan Murray, 11".
85. St. John, ivory mohair, made by Sandra Voegele, 13".

Corrie Watts

86. T. Bear, gold mohair, 11", 1995.
87. Maggie, taupe mohair, made by Janice Rogers, 14", 1996.
88. Wabbit, taupe mohair, made by Janice Rogers, 12", 1996.
89. Dimka, soft gold mohair, made by Janice Rogers, 16", 1998.
90. Phyllis, African mohair, made by Sandra Voegle, 9", 2001.
91. Untitled, knitted Teddy Wear, merino wool.

Acknowledgements

The curator would like to thank the Teddy Bear Artist Guild of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Designer Crafts Council, staff at the Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design, the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture and the collectors for sharing their bears with us: Michelle Daniels, Sara MacAulay, Wally McIlmoyl and Corrie Watts.

© 2002
Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design
1683 Barrington Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia